

Introduction

As Umberto Eco once famously noted, a man who loves a cultivated woman knows that “he cannot say to her ‘I love you madly,’ because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland” (Eco 1985: 67–68). But what about friendship? Has it also become devalued since, for instance, on Facebook friends are a number and the meaning of the verb “to friend” as “to befriend” has become archaic? Or is friendship “a way of life,” as Michel Foucault would have it (Foucault 1997 [1981]: 135), an underestimated category whose radical potential grows with evolving social models? What are the characteristics and forms of friendship? What are its laws? Is it based on mutual nourishment or exploitation? Dedication or self-love? In what way does it differ from other types of bonding? Does friendship go beyond the “proximity of congeneric double, beyond kinship, [...] beyond the principle of fraternity” (Derrida 2005: 277)? Or is it governed by “fraternal tenderness”? Is a friend addressed or described as “‘an absent other,’ a kind of adult cousin to the imaginary friends little children invent for themselves,” as Paul Auster recently said about his epistolary friend, J.M. Coetzee (Auster and Coetzee 2013: 230)?

These are just some of the questions which we wish to address in the present volume – whose title ostensibly refers not only to Derrida’s seminal study *Politiques de l’amitié* (1994) but, most importantly, to Foucault’s recognition that friendship as a “way of life” is capable of “yield[ing] a *culture* and an *ethics*” (Foucault 1997 [1981]: 138; our emphasis – E.K. and R.K.). What needs to be emphasised is that *The Politics and Poetics of Friendship*, although thematically consistent, is certainly not a monograph in a traditional sense, as the individual authors (from France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Turkey) share neither a common academic discipline (they are philosophers, art historians, historians, as well as film and literature scholars) nor a similar methodological background. Collectively, the contributors to the volume

address general questions, such as: What is a friend? What is friendship for? And what are its varieties/limits/costs? But, individually, they examine a wide range of topics: friendship in theory from ancient Greeks to poststructuralist thinkers, friendship from the perspective of gender, intergenerational and interspecies friendship, queer friendship, friendship between historical figures, including writers, and between fictional characters conflicted by class or ethno-religious divisions. However, taking into account the subject matter of our scholarly investigation, it seems more than apt to bring together a diverse body of specialists and a diverse body of topics, the aim being a multilayered and interdisciplinary analysis of various forms of friendship, and of both its politics and poetics.

The present volume opens with five essays that are particularly concerned with the regimes of friendship, those “schematic[s] of filiation” (Derrida 2005: viii) which, after Derrida, one is obliged to identify as the politics of friendship.

Teresa Bruś’s “The ‘I’ and the ‘Not-I’: Self-Knowledge in Friendship” offers a deliberation on the social (or relational) character of friendship understood as an intimate relationship of self with “an other self.” Having reviewed some classical conceptions of friendship, Bruś provides some crucial contexts for grasping the postures of politics and poetics of friendship and, in particular, their interrelationship with writing and reading. Consequently, literature is conceptualised as a form of friendship and the latter posited as a mode of self-conscious development of identity in and through interaction.

The two essays that follow, i.e. “Promise and Test(imony): Derrida’s Ethics of Friendship in ‘The De Man Case’” and “What Would It Be (Not) to Have *Amis*? On Jacques Derrida’s and Maurice Blanchot’s Friendship without Friends and Beyond” by Éva Antal and Michał Krzykawski respectively, investigate the politics of friendship through the joint lens of philosophy and philology. They both focus on a figure that has been central to the theorising and conceptualisation of friendship, namely the philosopher Jacques Derrida, as well as his “friends.” Antal is particularly concerned with the “critical” bond between Derrida and Paul de Man. She problematises the question of ethics (and ethical turn) in Derrida’s, as well as largely poststructuralist writing, with reference to de Man’s wartime collaboration and his “betrayal.” Moreover, she draws special attention to Derrida’s eulogies recognised not only as works of mourning but also as specimens of philopolemology. Krzykawski also shows considerable interest in Derrida’s circle, especially in his relationship with Maurice Blanchot. However, Krzykawski insists that what binds the two

philosophers together as friends is their conscious separation of friendship and familiarity – a pronouncement that leads to yet another conceptualisation of friendship, this time understood in line with the Polish philosopher Michał Herer as “force.” However, the essay emphasises the fact that the problem of friendship should be approached as a philological issue (since friendship and philology stem from the same disposition: to love [*philein*]).

Philosophical considerations with regard to friendship also feature prominently in Wojciech Szymański’s “Being with Oneself / Being with You: Friendship and Art Criticism.” The likes of Michel de Montaigne and Frédéric Chopin help Szymański to identify friendship as the passive side of existence, and to see a friend as a prosopopoeic character with whom one shares one’s life and sentiments and through whom one’s full existence becomes attained. Having extrapolated pre-(Renaissance) and post-Cartesian (Romantic) reflections on the nature of friendship, Szymański engages in a more pragmatic discussion of friendship between artists and art critics, focusing in particular on the kinship between Eva Hesse and Lucy Lippard.

Finally, Robert Kusek’s “Biographfiend Friends? Biographers and Their Subjects in *The Last Word* by Hanif Kureishi” offers a case study of the relation between biographers and biographical subjects. The questions that the essay poses are the following: Is the role of the biographer reconcilable with that of a friend? Can the biographical subject be – simultaneously – the object of knowledge and of affect? Is it possible to be “biografriends” or, alternatively, are biographers and their subjects doomed to being “biografiends”? Kusek address these issues by means of discussing the relationship between the biographer and his subject in Hanif Kureish’s 2014 novel *The Last Word*, which he recognises as a disguised story of V.S. Naipaul and his biographer(s).

The six essays that comprise Part Two, entitled “Beyond Kinship?”, shift from the more general considerations in Part One to more specific studies of friendship between a number of historical figures, especially writers.

In “Stepsisters, Foes, Friends: The Ambivalent Relationship between Mary Shelley and Claire Clairmont as Featured in Their Letters” Elisabetta Marino analyses the complicated and nuanced friendship between the two famous stepsisters. A close study of their letters as well as a number of biographical studies dedicated to both women helps Marino to argue against a customary description of the sisters’ relationship as marked by jealousy, mistrust, and mutual hostility. Emphasising their shared experiences, interests and aspirations, and, most importantly, mutual support

of their literary pursuits, Marino offers an alternative reading of the resentful stepsisters' story.

Kinga Latała's "*Goodbye to All That: A Memoir of Friendship as Its Breaking Point (the Friendship of Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon)*" is a study of the kinship between the two poets. Taking Graves's memoir as the essay's major point of reference, Latała provides a detailed account of Graves and Sassoon's friendship, focusing in particular on the closeness of the two men, their war-time and post-war experiences, as well as their gradual drifting apart due to their conflicting affinities and beliefs.

"If I Had to Choose': E.M. Forster and the Idea of Friendship" by Krzysztof Fordoński provides a comprehensive account of Forster's idea of friendship as it has been formulated by the writer himself and extrapolated by his biographers on the basis of his personal relationships. Highlighting the centrality of friendship in both Forster's life and his creative practice, and listing its essential "ingredients," Fordoński investigates various manifestations of friendship in the writer's selected fiction, as well as his sources of inspiration, which helped him to recognise friendship as a "supreme value."

A discussion of yet another literary friendship – this time between the poets Robert Frost and Edward Thomas – is the major thematic concern of Jacek Wiśniewski's "Two Roads: Edward Thomas and Robert Frost." Wiśniewski does not only analyse the letters and poems that Frost and Thomas exchanged during their intense, though short-lived, friendship but also offers a critical reading of their oeuvre, paying special attention to their distinct poetic sensibilities and diction.

Friendship between male writers also lies at the very heart of Rod Mengham's essay "'No Man Is an Island': The Geography of Friendship in Auden, Upward and Isherwood." The essay is chiefly concerned with the notion of cooperative work between the members of the famous Auden "gang," as well as specific pieces written by Auden, Upward and Isherwood in the mid-1930s. The titular "island" present in the writers' works is identified by Mengham as a shared literary motif and an intriguing metaphor for friendship, both as a concept and a lived experience.

The last contribution to Part Two is an essay entitled "So Close yet So Far Away: Mutual and Textual Spaces of the 1950 Generation in Turkish Literature" by Busra Copuroglu. It discusses friendship – and its epistolary manifestation – between two pillars of Turkish modern literature, namely Tezer Özlü and Ferit Edgü. Bringing together the notions of "elective community" (Maurice Blanchot) and "textual friendship" (Kuisma Korhonen), Copuroglu postulates understanding of friendship as

a phenomenon beyond an affective state. This new form of (non)literary kinship is subsequently extended onto the whole generation of the 1950 Generation of Turkish writers.

The four essays in Part Three, entitled “The Cultural Poetics of Friendship,” share their interest in the Victorian period and focus on friendship from the perspective of gender by reflecting on the interrelationship between friendship and culture.

Ilona Dobosiewicz’s “‘What Woman Ever Must Be [...] the Friend of Woman’: Female Friendship in Sarah Stickney Ellis’s Conduct Manuals” analyses Ellis’s highly popular advice manuals for middle-class women. Dobosiewicz demonstrates how, in addition to promoting women’s devotion to their husbands and children, the manuals also advocated female friendship, which – through initiatives such as ladies’ charities – laid the groundwork for the future feminist movement.

The role of female friendship on the literary scene is explored by Anna Paluchowska-Messing in her “A Friend in Need? Friends and Frances Burney’s Place in the Literary Canon.” The essay shows how friendly advice helped Burney self-manage her celebrity image during her lifetime, and traces the author’s friends’ influence on the trajectory of her post-humous literary reputation.

The remaining two essays in this section both examine one of the most famous literary friendships – that of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. Nathalie Jaëck’s “‘Some Friend of Yours, Perhaps?’ ‘Except Yourself I Have None’: Towards a Poetics of Friendship in Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes Stories” shows how the celebrated friendship displaces the typical politics of 19th-century male bonding, since Holmes and Watson create a form of permanent domestic attachment which becomes subversive. Furthermore, Jaëck elaborates on Doyle’s figure of the friend-narrator who opened up multiple possibilities for narrative manipulation, crucial in a detective story.

In turn, Maria Fleischhack offers “Alternative Readings of the Friendship of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson.” Fleischhack compares the Victorian original with a number of cinematic and TV adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes canon including online fanfiction. Especially the latter and most contemporary, as well as liberal, platform reveals a popular demand for greater intimacy between the world-renowned detective and his sidekick and meets it by envisioning the duo’s relationship as a romantic one.

Part Four takes its title, “Trances, Traumas, Transgressions,” from the 2013 book *Janion. Transe – trauma – transgresje. 1: Niedobre dziecię* (Bad Child), a spoken autobiography of Maria Janion, a distinguished Polish

literary critic and theoretician, in the form of a conversation with another Polish literary historian and critic, as well as a fellow-feminist, Kazimiera Szczuka. This grouping of essays concentrates on the question of friendship as a bond which eludes more conventional definitions of the term, either by transgressing today's moral and social norms or by extending beyond humankind.

Anna Kérchy's "Amicable Alices. Lewis Carroll and His Child Friends" collates critical and auto/biographical representations of the – by contemporary standards – controversial friendships between Carroll and several underage girls. Throughout the essay Kérchy bears in mind how significantly cultural perceptions of a friendly relationship between an adult (man) and a (girl) child have changed since the Victorian period, while proposing that for the author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* the young girls were not only child muses, but rather "co-authors" of the famous works.

These considerations on intergenerational bonding are followed by two reflections on the possibility of interspecies friendship. Andrew Wells in his "'With Friends Like These...': Friendship and Humanity in Gulliver's Fourth Voyage" examines the question of friendship in Houyhnhnmland and proposes that, owing to their incapacity to develop genuine bonds with emotional beings, the Houyhnhnms can be said to represent 18th-century scientists and philosophers' perilous overestimation of reason as a decisive factor for humanity. Wells demonstrates how Swift opted against it by positing the capacity for emotional amicable relations as humanity's essential characteristic.

Continuing the equine theme, in her "From Human-Animal Friendship to Human-Animal History: Steven Spielberg's *War Horse*" Barbara Klonowska analyses Steven Spielberg's 2011 film *War Horse*. The cinematic narrative foregrounding a human-animal friendship is discussed as a rarely undertaken effort to present history – here, more specifically, the history of WWI and the Western front – as one affecting non-humans as well. Klonowska sees the film as not only a gesture of friendship towards the radical Others that all animals are for humans, but also as an important cultural step towards a more inclusive vision of history.

The title of Part Five, "Friendship, Hateship, Loveship..." is borrowed from *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* – a 2001 collection of short stories by Alice Munro. As the above paraphrase and at the same time incomplete enumeration is intended to suggest, the articles in this final section problematise the phenomenon of friendship by connecting it with several other simultaneous, and even contrasting, conditions.

The first of them is treachery – which is addressed by Rowland Cotterill in his “Shakespearean Friendship and Betrayal.” Cotterill meticulously traces a pattern of treacherous friendship throughout Shakespearean drama, proposing that there are crucial, and not only negative, implications of such a feature of Shakespeare’s dramaturgy, as it is significant for structure, psychology and agency. Exploring this problem, the study also poses the broader question of what it means in Shakespearean drama to have and to be a friend.

Leszek Drong’s “Best Buddies in Belfast: Politicising Friendship in *Ripley Bogle* and *Eureka Street* by Robert McLiam Wilson” is a comparative analysis of the two novels which offers a contribution to the discussion of fictional representation of the impact of the Troubles in Northern Ireland on friendship and loyalty between members of the same community and on both sides of the ethno-religious divide.

In the next essay, friendship is also affected by a conflict, but this time caused by class divisions. In her “Friendship and Money in Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*,” Ewa Kowal analyses the Pakistani author’s debut novel about an interclass friendship challenged above all by economic differences which lead to its dramatic disintegration. The novel’s central story is read as a small-scale representation of Pakistan’s problem of vast class inequality exacerbated by rapid globalisation.

Finally, in Wojciech Drag’s “In Pieces: Fragmentation, Friendship and Mourning in B.S. Johnson’s *The Unfortunates*” friendship is confronted with the ultimate problem of mortality. The essay reflects on friendship as a site of ongoing struggle between the altruistic and egoistic motives and addresses the ways in which the aleatory form of Johnson’s elegy informs its representation of mourning.

Since it would be impossible to provide any synthesis of friendship on the pages that follow, what we hope for instead is that *The Politics and Poetics of Friendship* inspires further reflection and broadens the scope of future discussions on its subject matter.

Finally, we should like to take this opportunity to express our profound gratitude and debt to Professor Tomasz Basiuk – a major source of inspiration for this project, its faithful patron from the very beginning, as well as the most insightful reviewer. Thank you for helping us make a book not only *about* but also *of* friendship.

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